**Bell Work**

**Class 1:** Reflect on “Who *you* are in different places, cliques, neighborhoods, and social settings.” Do you change? Why?

**Class 2:** Is W.E.B. Dubois’s condition of “twoness” still alive? How? What can you do to change this? Is it always a problem?

**Class 3:** Reflect on Grandison’s Character, is he offensive? Predictions? Is the topic of slavery fit for a comedy?

**Class 4:** Reflect on Honesty in the face of persecution. Is Grandison actually disrespectful to anyone? Or is he merely looking out for himself and his family when the opportunity arises? When does this form of self-efficacy constitute betrayal?

**Class 5:** What is the purpose of the radio in Richard Wright’s “The Man Who Lived Underground?”

**Class 6:** When Fred Daniels steals a pack of cigarettes, it is stated that he “appropriated it” (p.1451). What does this suggest? Is this a justifiable means of describing his actions? Why or why not?

**Class 7:** Introduction to music of John Darnielle. Listen to “This Year,” Reflect on the relevance of lyrics in your own life. The chorus is an oxymoron. Still, it seems metaphorical. What does “I am going to make it / Through this year / If it kills me” mean to you?

**Class 8:** The first two chapters of *Wolf in White Van* book are vague. There is italicized sci-fi sounding writing clashing with the narrator’s descriptions of a hospital room, and the question of forever compounded with questions regarding the development of perspective. It’s a lot to take in. What do you make of this? What predictions do you have? Though it’s early, are there any connections that can be drawn from our readings of African American authors in the past few weeks? What do you think Sean’s (the main character) condition is?

**Class 9:** Chapter 4 opens with harsh descriptions of high school bullying. There is a sense of under-development in all characters portrayed. Nobody knows the harm they are causing, though the characters being hurt absorb it all. These characters are social outcasts, and they expect this, primarily because of their interests, because they are overweight, and because they are nerds. What lasting effect might this have? What are some predictions for the future actions of these miserable high school students? Do they have the ability to fight against this? Or do they accept their role? In our previous readings, what characters might be related to characters such as Teague? Also, consider that it is possible to look at bullying in a completely different light. Couldn’t one say, “These people should have the self-confidence to believe in theirselves, they should not be damaged so easily by the opinions of others.” Is there truth to this viewpoint?

**Class 10:** Ch 6 gives insight into the court case Carrie’s parents filed against Sean Phillips. His Mail order role playing game, Trace Italian, may have contributed to their death. This situation really exemplifies the effects of young decisions on older, experienced selves or loved ones. This is contrast is repeatedly displayed throughout the novel. However, the novel doesn’t seem to suggest any solution to what people can do to lessen these blows. What do you think Darnielle is trying to suggest? Is it merely that one must be aware of permanent decisions? Or is he saying that one cannot avoid many permanent decisions.

**ALSO:** In reference to a game subscriber who knew when to quit, on pg. 64 Sean narrates, “I’d left out a lot of things I’d wanted to throw [into the court case]: Chris Haynes, for instance, how I felt like his exit proved there was nothing wrong with living in dreams as long as you didn’t let yourself get carried away.” This quote deals with the effects of obsession. Where might one draw the line for “carried away”? Where did Carrie and Lance go wrong? How could this have been avoided? Do these dream lands exist outside of fictitious game worlds? In what other parts of life might be obsession destroy a person?

**Class 11:** Ch. 8 deals a lot with the guilt that Sean carries. Is his guilt different in content from the guilt that society assumes he carries? How might the projection of guilt onto Sean Phillips be related to previous characters we’ve read about? Are the people who project this guilt aware of what they are doing? How might a person who projects this image onto Sean react if confronted about it? Is it their fault that they are submitting to the action of projecting an image onto others?

**Class 12:** In Chapter 10, While Sean is cleaning out his cupboard he discovers his ancient medication from days gone by. He spends most of the chapter reflecting on this. He states on page 100, “I’d promised myself that all this was temporary, the medication and the bed in the room where the blinds were always down, and that I would get out of it somehow, get away somewhere, do something again with little reference to any of it.” He seems to be referencing the creation of his fictional world, Trace Italian. It would seem, everyone needs a place to escape to, but there are problems created by escaping. What sort of resolution might Sean, or anyone else, find in escaping? How might they escape without sacrificing, or hiding from, reality? Is Sean in a different situation from others? Essentially, society has made his reality into something to be pitied, something *unreal.* Does this affect his justification for escaping?

**Class 13:** Chapter 12 gives much needed insight to the functioning and the creation of *Trace Italian.* The reader begins to view Sean Phillips as the ruler and creator of a fantastical realm, which is separate from his ugly seat in reality. Nonetheless, this realm is a job to Sean, it is his workplace. Sean relays an incident where he believes he saw Chris Haynes, his favorite player of *Trace Italian,* in the real world. He doesn’t confirm this, but he seems to be sure of it. But the question is, Why does Sean hold Chris in such high regard merely because he was able to quit *Trace Italian?* He was one of the most clever and advanced players of the game, which is why he initially gained Sean’s respect, but why does this respect multiply after Chris walked away from the game?

**Class 14:** In chapter 14, Sean breaks down further the creation process of Trace Italian. Essentially, it exists first as a series of mathematical options, which he later adds prose and descriptions to which help each player visualize the mathematical tree of events as situations where a player must make a choice. The novel displays the raw data. Everyone is searching for Trace Italian, though they really don’t know what it is or how far away it is. Death is easy to avoid, it’s the compilation of decision making which really makes up the game. How does this relate to the reality we are accustomed to in our own lives? Also, it is stated that nobody has ever reached the Trace Italian, and probably nobody ever will. How might this relate to *your* reality?

**Class 15:** Chapter 16 is full of three seemingly unrelated, vague, depictions. This is fairly constant throughout the book, but as the novel is closing, it can be frustrating to not receive exact definition. The depictions are as follows: 1) Reminiscing of the wonderful Trace Italian player, Chris Haynes, with an emphasis on Chris’s belief in his character’s invincibility. 2) Dialogue between Sean and a medical worker discussing the changes in modern facial reconstruction surgery. Sean seems to have no interest. 3) A depiction of an odd traffic accident that took place in front of Sean’s house, it seemed intentional. What might these three events signify, if anything? What might Sean’s stance in each of these events signify about his personality?